

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SAJ-01 NSC-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07

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R 061716Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0883

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

USMISSION OECD PARIS

AMCONSUL BELFAST

AMCONSUL EDINBURGH

AMCONSUL LIVERPOOL

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, UK

SUBJECT: CONSERVATIVES GAIN IN LOCAL ELECTIONS

1. IN LOW-PARTICIPATION POLLING MAY 1 FOR SOME 856 SEATS
ON 36 METROPOLITAN DISTRICT COUNCILS IN THE MIDLANDS AND
NORTH ENGLAND, CONSERVATIVES WERE MAJOR WINNERS, GAINING
208 SEATS. LABOR LOST 214 SEATS IN ALL, LOSING CONTROL
IN BIRMINGHAM, ROCHDALE AND KIRKLEES. LIBERAL PARTY WON
SOME AND LOST SOME, BUT MAINTAINED ITS PREVIOUS LEVEL.

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2. TURNOUT WAS VERY LOW, IN SOME TOWNS NO MORE THAN 14

PERCENT OF THE ELECTORATE. LOW TURNOUT COMBINED WITH IMPORTANCE OF LOCAL FACTORS AND PERSONALITIES SUGGEST THAT PROGNOSTICATORS SHOULD BE CAREFUL IN INTERPRETING ELECTION RESULTS.

3. MRS. THATCHER MADE SOME COMMENTS TO A PARTY MEETING MAY 2, CONCLUDING THAT CONSERVATIVE SUCCESSES IN THE BALLOTING FORESHADOWED A FAVORABLE REFERENDUM VOTE (I.E., YES) AND A CONSERVATIVE VICTORY AT THE NEXT GENERAL ELECTION. ALTHOUGH HER REMARKS WERE HIGHLY PARTISAN MADE IN PARTISAN SURROUNDINGS, CONSERVATIVES GENERALLY HAVE BEEN BUOYED UP BY THE SWING OF 10-13 PERCENT (FIGURED ON THE LAST LOCAL ELECTIONS IN 1973) AWAY FROM LABOR. MOST CONSERVATIVES ACKNOWLEDGE THE PARTY DOES BEST IN LOCAL AND BY-ELECTIONS WHEN THE PARTY IS IN OPPOSITION, AND YET THEY FIND THE MAY 1 RESULTS ENCOURAGING.

4. LABOR WAS, OF COURSE, DISAPPOINTED AND BLAMED RECENT RATE INCREASES, INFLATION, THE OIL CRISIS, ETC. LIBERALS WERE ALSO DISAPPOINTED PARTICULARLY BECAUSE THEY DID NOT SWEEP IN LIVERPOOL AS THEY HAD ANTICIPATED.

5. WHAT SEEMS MOST INTERESTING TO US IS THE REVIVAL OF CONSERVATIVES IN INDUSTRIALIZED AREAS WHERE THEY LOST HEAVILY IN THE 1974 GENERAL ELECTIONS. WHILE IT IS STILL TOO EARLY TO CONSIDER THIS A BEGINNING TO A GROUNDSWELL SHIFT AWAY FROM LABOR, THE CONSERVATIVES CAN WELL BE SATISFIED WITH THEIR SHOWING. IN THIS CONNECTION, THE UPCOMING BY-ELECTION TO FILL THE HAMLING SEAT, PROBABLY IN LATE JUNE, MAY PROVIDE A MORE RELIABLE INDICATOR OF THE SHIFTS IN ELECTORATE SUPPORT.

RICHARDSON

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